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ABSTRACT

This report discusses a project addressing the difficulties that Queens College has with English as a Second Language (ESL) students in the typical humanities classroom. ESL students represent 40% of the college's student body, and instructing them is a significant intellectual and pedagogical challenge. Despite training in English language and composition, ESL students and their teachers have problems due to incomplete acculturation. The result is that when they begin their required humanities courses, many experience considerable difficulty. Some drop out of college and others feel themselves limited to the sciences for their choice of major. To remedy this problem, Queens College designed syllabi for a course for students unfamiliar with the assumptions of American culture. A biweekly faculty seminar met to develop the syllabi. The seminar discussed important theoretical issues, designed trial syllabi, and designed evaluation procedures to gather information on student response. After completing the third semester of teaching courses designed by this seminar, the importance of teaching every component of a course with a density of culturally and historically significant material was noted. Issues must be significantly historicized for students to actively grasp the assumptions behind them and to have enough information to demonstrate that mastery. Student comments on these courses are favorable, and student enrollments have jumped. (SM)

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ESL STUDENTS AND THE STUDY OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project is funded with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.

ABSTRACT

ESL STUDENTS AND THE STUDY OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Our project addresses the difficulties that Queens College ESL students confront in the typical humanities classroom. These students represent almost 40% of our student body; instructing them is one of the most significant intellectual and pedagogical challenges faced by many universities today.

Our students have received training in English language and English composition. Numerous problems, owing to students' incomplete acculturation, remain for both the students and their teachers. The result is that, when these students begin their required humanities courses, many experience considerable difficulty. Some drop out of college; others feel themselves limited to the sciences for their choice of major.

To remedy this problem, we have received support from FIPSE to form a group of faculty to design syllabi for a course for students unfamiliar with the assumptions of American culture and to research and publish on issues related to that effort. We are now at the beginning of our third and final year. The faculty group has informed themselves about the theoretical problems embedded in the project, problems of canon-formation, cultural literacy, and cross-cultural and interdisciplinary studies; it has also done research into a number of areas in order to develop material for its course. In particular, it has concentrated on immigrant history and literature; it has also worked with material that would provide cross-cultural perspectives on American texts. Members of the faculty group have been teaching versions of the course now for three semesters and experimenting with a variety of pedagogical techniques, meant to allow students to use their cross-cultural perspectives in becoming accurate readers of American culture.

The faculty group has also designed tools to evaluate the success or failure of its different syllabi and approaches. It also has gathered information about the students themselves. After a trial run, evaluation methods were refined; the information from the first implementation of the revised instruments is now being interpreted. Anecdotal evidence, as well as student enrollment in the courses, however, indicate that progress is being made.

By the end of the final year the faculty group will have created a number of model syllabi for a course which will be a permanent part of the College curriculum. It will also have created a group of faculty who will train other teachers at Queens how to work with non-native students in humanities courses. It will also publish on the intellectual and pedagogical issues involved in its work. In these ways, the project will be a model for other universities facing the same problems.

ESL STUDENTS AND THE STUDY OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Frederick Buell

William Kelly

Introduction

In the following pages, we will be describing the goals, structure, and progress we have made in carrying out a project in cultural literacy. Our goal was to remedy a problem at Queens College by introducing a rapidly-growing population of non-native students to the fundamental assumptions of American culture. Simultaneously, we wished to discuss, research, and debate the issues in which this task was embedded. We also hoped to revise our understanding of our own tradition in light of what we learned.

In the material that follows, we shall first discuss the problem we confronted and then detail the structure and substance of our ongoing response. The latter discussion we have divided into two topics, corresponding to the two basic activities of our project. First, we will examine the structure, agenda, discussions, and results of the faculty seminar we established as a first step toward meeting our goals; second, we will discuss the experimental course the faculty seminar has been designing for non-native students.

The Problem

The problem that our project addresses is a particularly urgent one for Queens College; it is also a difficult or pressing issue at many colleges throughout the country. In recent years, Queens College has experienced a dramatic increase in its ESL population. New immigration in Queens' feeder neighborhoods has brought students from over forty-two countries to the College. The Queens community is now the East coast's largest port of entry for new immigrants. It is home to the largest populations of Greeks, South Asians, Koreans, Ecuadorians, and Israelis in North America. Moreover, its Japanese, Colombian, Soviet Jewish, Vietnamese, Italian, and Chinese immigrant populations are among the largest of their kind in the United States. On campus, student population is now almost 40% foreign-born; the great majority of these students are citizens or permanent residents.

The College's first response to this demographic change was to develop a cohesive program of instruction to help non-native students acquire basic English skills. By carefully testing and placing entering students on one of three instructional levels, the College has been able to provide educational access while maintaining high academic standards. Characteristically, non-native students enter at level two or level three, where instruction in the English language is provided. When they successfully complete courses at those levels and pass the appropriate exit examinations, they progress to level one English Department courses. These classes are non-remedial, college-level composition courses designed specifically for ESL students. They cover the same material as parallel courses offered to native speakers, but are taught by teachers trained in ESL instruction and make use of specially-designed syllabi.

After completing two semesters of work at level one, non-native students are then mainstreamed for a final semester of composition instruction.

Beyond the composition program, all students are required to complete a two-tiered humanities requirement: a basic humanities course and an elective chosen from a list of advanced courses. It is at this point that many of our ESL students find themselves severely disadvantaged compared to their native-speaking counterparts. However fully non-native students have mastered the intricacies of English exposition, they are frequently lost in courses which assume familiarity with Western, and specifically American, cultural traditions. This comprehension gap has led to segregated classrooms in which native students participate fully in class discussion while their non-native peers listen in silence.

The difficulties non-native students experience are not entirely informational. In general, they know very little about American literature and history, but as Chester Finn, Diane Ravitch, and many others have demonstrated, that problem is hardly unique to newly-arriving immigrants. The primary problem these students confront is more contextual than informational. What separates second-language students from their native peers is a lack of familiarity with the belief and value structures against which America's cultural history has unfolded. Even those native students who are unable to locate the Civil War in the nineteenth century or who can not identify Huckleberry Finn as a significant American novel can readily grasp the intellectual and emotional issues at stake during particular passages of the nation's history. Their immersion in the institutional life of the culture, in its public rhetoric, and in its popular expression has furnished them with a vocabulary and a syntax which enables them to respond to nuance, allusion, and paradox in even unfamiliar texts. That cultural language, and hence the

ability to make sense of the books they read is less available to non-native students.

Tragically, these students are often among our best and brightest. The experience of new immigrants differs distinctly from conventional American notions about the cultural deprivation implicit in immigration. Many of our students come from sophisticated educational backgrounds in their own homelands, and most are quite familiar with aspects of global, post-modern culture. These students, therefore, bring a great deal of curiosity and a genuinely cross-cultural perspective to their classes, which, if properly encouraged, would add greatly to the educational experience of their fellow students. At present, however, the difficulty ESL students experience in humanities courses forces many of them who would otherwise prefer a wider choice of majors to pick the sciences. Not only does this funneling of ESL students into science departments deny our college and community the valuable resource of gifted and eager humanists, it also sorely limits the exposure of these students to America's intellectual and cultural heritage. As a result, they never acquire the humanistic background necessary to insure their full participation in our society. Moreover, the absence of a wide range of educational opportunities adversely affects the retention rates of ESL students. Forced to major in areas alien to their interests, repeatedly perceived as slow rather than talented, disadvantaged by their background rather than empowered by it, many of these students fail to complete their degrees and forfeit their access to post-secondary education.

The strains these students experience in their humanities courses are felt as well by their teachers. Faculty members frequently experience frustration stemming from a lack of understanding of how the varied cultural perspectives of their students affect their comprehension. Thus, they have trouble grasping

the ways in which the American tradition may present these students with difficulties that do not confront a student born and raised here. This problem has become one of growing importance at Queens when college-wide requirements forced ESL students to enter upper-level as well as introductory humanities courses. Specialists find their ability to teach their subject matter on a sophisticated level is impaired if a class contains a number of students imperfectly acculturated and the teacher is uncertain about how this lack of acculturation affects their comprehension of the material. One of the project's goals, therefore, is to interest faculty in the challenge of teaching these students and to suggest ways in which meeting it will draw upon and extend their scholarly expertise.

Finally, the challenge of teaching ESL students effectively is related to a challenge that the humanities in America are facing in a variety of important ways. What we need to do when we reconceive our material for presentation to ESL students is to significantly redefine our intellectual tradition. This is a practical as well as theoretical issue. It is related to the increasing cultural heterogeneity of the nation's population, which is having a growing impact on the composition of college student bodies and the structure of the curriculum. (The oral historian Al Santoli notes that by the middle of the next century Americans of European descent will no longer be the majority). It is also important to the ongoing attempts, common to many disciplines in the humanities, to reconsider the nature of the traditions they study, in the context of an emphasis on cultural pluralism in both domestic and global studies.

The Project

To meet the challenges of teaching a new group of non-traditional students, of involving and training faculty, and of grappling with the pedagogical and theoretical issues such work entails, we designed a program that had two major components. We acquired financial support from the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education to convene a faculty seminar, releasing eight faculty members from one course per year to participate in the work of the seminar. (In addition, we, as directors of the project, and a third faculty member, Professor Jacqueline Costello of the English Department, were released for administrative duties associated with the grant; Professor Costello took charge of overseeing the design, implementation, and interpretation of testing and evaluation procedures). The College provided the money to fund sections of the course the faculty designed; the course was placed so as to satisfy the first semester of the College's humanities requirement. To describe how we have proceeded and what we have accomplised so far, it will be helpful to discuss these two components of our program seriatim.

The Faculty Seminar

Structure of the Seminar. Since our object was to provide an introduction to American culture, we made the seminar an interdisciplinary group. In year one of our three-year project, the seminar included the principal investigators, both of whom are Americanists and were then serving as Chairman and Associate Chairman of the English Department, two English department faculty members whose specialties are ESL instruction, Professors Jacqueline Costello and Amy Tucker, two English department faculty members

whose relevant areas of interest are discovery literature and Afro-American literature. Professors Barbara Bowen and Melvin Dixon, a specialist in American history, Professor Frank Warren, and a member of the Comparative Literature department, Professor Joan Dayan, whose areas of interest include Caribbean and American literature. At the end of the first project year, we reconstituted the seminar somewhat, in order to involve as many faculty members in the project as possible and to shift slightly the direction of the seminar somewhat. Melvin Dixon, Joan Dayan, and Barbara Bowen dropped out; another Americanist from the English department, Professor Lois Hughson, and Professor William Proefriedt, a specialist in education in America, joined us. Also joining us ex officio were Professor Francoise Burgess, an exchange professor from Paris, and the present English department chairman, Professor Charles Molesworth.

The seminar, which met bi-weekly, adopted the following agenda for its first semester of work: studying and discussing a number of the important theoretical issues involved in our project; assembling a small permanent library of materials; designing trial syllabi for the pilot course to be taught the following semester; and designing questionnaires, tests, and other evaluation procedures to allow us to gather information about our students and about the success or failure of our different approaches. Experimental syllabi were designed by all faculty seminar members individually; each was then discussed by the group as a whole. The faculty members who were to teach the first sections (membership in the faculty seminar entailed a teaching commitment) then refined their syllabi in light of the group's commentary. We considered individual enterprise, subject to group feedback, more productive than a collectively-drawn syllabus. There were simply too many different possible approaches to the problem, and vastly too much material to be included

in one format; just as important, we wanted to start a tradition of individual creative involvement that might not only elicit more from us, but would also serve to motivate others who would teach the course after the project had concluded.

In the second semester, we continued our theoretical discussions, giving them, however, a tighter focus by choosing a more specific area of concentration that was historical, rather than theoretical, in emphasis. We read a series of texts together; each seminar member, in turn, wrote papers about the material, ones that were meant to serve as aids in focusing our discussion. Professor Buell, who taught the pilot section, again presented his trial syllabus; moreover, he kept the group informed throughtout the semester of his progress in the classroom. We originally planned to have members of the seminar sit in on the classes; in practice, however, that seemed to do more harm than good, because the students, sensitive from past experience about their ability to perform before unfamiliar observers, tended to sit in silence during those classes. At the end of the seminar, Professor Buell prepared a finished version of his syllabus, along with a narrative designed to allow someone who had not been part of the seminar to understand both the underlying strategies and the content of his course. The evaluation package--a holistically graded test, criteria for grading it, evaluation forms, questionnaires, and records of class work--was also given a trial run and adjusted in a number of important ways in order to make it more informative and reliable.

In the second year and a half of the project, we have continued these activities of syllabus design and refinement, evaluation of our courses, and study of our students. At the same time, each member of the seminar has committed him/herself to giving a substantial paper or presentation to the

members of the seminar on material and issues important to our project. At the end of the first project year, when the seminar was reconstituted, interested faculty across the campus were invited to join the seminar; all applicants were asked to describe their ongoing scholarly work and to suggest a topic for a paper they might present to the group. Once presented, these papers were to become a part of the permanent records of the project, available for use by later teachers of the course.

With the Spring, 1989 semester, we are now beginning the seminar's third and final year, after which the course will continue as a part of the College's permanent offerings. Seminar members will continue to teach this course and will serve as trainers of new staff. In the final semester, we plan to consolidate our work in syllabus design by compiling a set of successful syllabi and materials, each with an accompanying narrative, to help train new staff. We also plan to stage a symposium on our work and hope to involve other faculty members in the challenges of teaching non-native students.

Seminar Agenda and Content. Intellectually, the faculty seminar faced a set of complicated issues. Each one, it seemed, was enmeshed in controversy. Our most practical goal--to design and teach a course in American culture for non-native students--involved much more than syllabus design. It meant investigating important intellectual and pedagogical questions, such as cultural literacy, canon formation, and the problematics of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary studies. What was cultural literacy, and how did one acquire it? What was--in light of so many current attempts to reconceive our disciplines--the nature of our tradition itself? These were anything but academic questions; they were highly charged ones, both intellectually and politically. As we found, the issue of educating immigrants in American tradition had a politically-charged history, from the proposed founding of a

national university in Washington's time, to the rise of the common schools in the nineteenth century, to the Americanization movement in the early twentieth century. Both in choosing what we intended to teach and in considering how we meant to teach it, then, we had to be extremely sensitive to the ideological implications of syllabus design and pedagogical method.

These questions preoccupied us at first. Behind them, however, lay another set of problems, less overtly political, but equally daunting. Along with deciding how to present American materials to non-native students, we had, in the original design of our program, committed ourselves to exploring the following topics as sources of cross-culturally interesting material: immigration history and the literature of immigration, comparative New World experience in North and South America, and reflections of American characters and values in fiction and non-fiction by foreign observers of America. We saw our immediate historical circumstances as necessitating a cross-cultural approach. Internally, assimilation had become a bad word and Anglo-conformism and nativism in their former, more blatant forms were in disrepute and on the decline; at the same time, however, anxiety about loss of cultural coherence had become a public topic of concern and an important part of the educational agenda of increasingly influential neo-conservatives. Externally, America's relations with the rest of the world had shifted; America's global relationships had become a concern of daily economic, as well as political, life. To balance these conflicting claims on our and our students' attention, we considered it crucial to work with methods and materials that juxtaposed cultures rather than suppressed one in favor of another. But just how, in the absence of a meta-cultural language, did one make meaningful cross-cultural juxtapositions? Wasn't methodology also here a crucial problem?

During the first semester (Spring, 1987) of our project, the faculty

seminar functioned as a discussion group. Beginning with Henry Lewis Gates' anthology of critical theory, Race, Writing and Difference, the group focused on the nature of America's cultural tradition in the context of recent debate about the canon. We discussed and debated the status of a mainstream tradition during a time in which challenges to that tradition have been mounted by cultural pluralists. We made our discussion more concrete by reading next a series of texts by Black Americans and immigrant writers and considering the notions of pluralism in America before and after the surge of immigration in the later nineteenth century.

We then turned to the issues of cultural literacy and a common tradition raised by the Carnegie and Bennett reports and by such popular polemics as E.D. Hirsch's Cultural Literacy and Allan Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind. We also read the small but growing contribution that ESL specialists have made to this field.

We then made our debates as concrete as possible by turning to the practical work of syllabus design. Equally important, we focused, during the second semester of the project year, on a more specific topic, historical rather than theoretical in nature: immigration history and literature. Because we had started teaching the pilot section of our course, we wanted to learn as much as we could about the historical and literary contexts against which our students' experience should be placed. Moreover, we wanted to amass more materials on the immigrant experience as represented in history and literature for the sake of our syllabi. Finally, we hoped that an in-depth study of immigrants' encounters with American culture in depth would help us historicize our preceding theoretical discussions.

The faculty seminar thus read and discussed, starting in the Fall of 1987 and continuing into the present semester, a succession of books on the history

of the immigrants, including Oscar Handlin's The Uprooted, John Bodnar's The Transplanted, Steven Steinberg's The Ethnic Myth, and Thomas Sowell's Ethnic America. In conjunction with this reading, we studied a range of immigrant writing, including the pieces in Thomas Wheeler's anthology The Immigrant Experience. We also read closely, and discussed at length, Werner Sollors' Beyond Ethnicity. With money the College provided, we purchased a small library of additional books that members of the seminar have consulted for our discussions.

The reading we did, coupled with our getting to know our students firsthand in the classroom, aided us greatly in shifting our thought about the issues we had been debating the first year. Canon questions remained important, but they began to recede as another, more pressing problem emerged. Whether a text we presented was "canonical" or "non-canonical" did not change the fact that we still had to discover ways of presenting it to our international audience. Both sorts of texts presented our students with unfamiliar material and unfamiliar assumptions; if a "canonical" or "majority" text represented many unknowns, so did a "non-canonical" or "marginalized" text. Similarly, the history of shifting, highly politicized relationships, in both society and higher culture, between "mainstream" and "margin" were also unknown to our students; most of the features of the American multi-ethnic map were something our students had to learn to understand. Many of our students came from places with plural cultures, from countries like Malaysia, Russia, or India; the structures governing that plurality and the ideals that informed them differed, however, markedly from what they found in America. We began, more and more, to study the structure of America's plural tradition rather than debate from points of view within it.

New York City's visible multi-ethnicity made these questions quite

prominent for our students. At one extreme, some lamented, as did one Soviet Jewish immigrant quoted by Anneliese Orleck in her article "The Soviet Jews" (in Nancy Foner, ed., New Immigrants in New York), "Where are the real Americans? I haven't met any of them yet"; others expressed a desire to really study American culture by reading its "famous" texts. The former, it seemed, reflected the different stresses of their plural societies of origin by seeking an official center; the latter (the desire to read "famous" texts was expressed most recently by a Japanese student) may have reflected culturally-created unease with the notion of a pluralistic society. At the other extreme, many students struggled to piece together for themselves the map of America's ethnic relations and also to understand how, in the past, immigrants had been placed differently in that map, due to the cultures they brought with them, the historical circumstances of their immigration, and majority and minority attitudes in the American society receiving them. Clearly, for these students, what America they might come to belong to was a question that concerned them. They needed to work through many misunderstandings of the overall map and the particular historical circumstances of different periods for them to gain the orientation they sought. The cultural pluralism that our students represented to us was not to be equated or confused with the cultural pluralism they encountered in American society; our students needed to learn about the assumptions of the American version just as much as they needed to be informed about any of the other assumptions of American culture.

If, in meeting and studying our students, we came to see a difference between an international and American ethnic perspective, we were struck just as forcefully by the enormous diversity we found among the students themselves. Israelis, Koreans, Afghans, Columbians, Haitians, their experience and their expectations could not have been more divergent; moreover, the sort of unity that might ultimately be forged from their diversity was difficult, if

not impossible, to predict. Just as the experience of the immigrants of the 1880's and 90's differed sharply from that of the Irish in the 1840's or the English in the 1630's, or for that matter from that of the Southern blacks in the 1920's and 30's, this generation of immigrants differed from those who came before. Like them, they would make their own accomodations with America. To think otherwise was to deny their particularity and their difference, to agree with Werner Sollors that ethnic difference was more a matter of boundary formation than of cultural content. As a result, a syllabus presupposing an orderly vision of American identity was remote from the students' experience. More important, their status as emergent Americans argued against the adequacy of any one-dimensional definition of national identity.

The result of these discoveries was a curious reversal of some of the terms of our controversies on the one hand and a vivid sense of the necessarily unfinished quality that our work would have on the other. We found that, to use a term from the theoretical controversy in which our disputes were embedded, we had less to "defamiliarize" ourselves with canonical texts in order to approach non-canonical texts fairly; we needed instead to "defamiliarize" ourselves with both kind of texts in order to learn how our students might approach them. Also, we needed to construct syllabi that presented American diversity as a cultural creation very much in process. We needed to emphasize the unfinished quality of American literature or culture as a unifying principle and construct reading lists that would illustrate America's inclination toward the continual revision of the endlessly varied national self. Terms like mainstream and margin, then would be meaningless; they would imply closure, not flux.

Reading immigration history and studying our students also altered our pedagogical disputes. Those disputes had assumed much too easily that our students were ready to have the work of cultural disenfranchisement completed

by assimilation in our classroom. The disputes implicitly assumed that our students were still inscribed in Oscar Handlin's epic of cultural disenfranchisement, one in which pre-industrial immigrants with little or no previous possession of higher culture in their homelands came to an industrial society that stripped what little they had from them. We found instead that many of our students contradicted that model; similarly, American society had changed significantly. As a result, we grew less preoccupied with the danger of assimilation in our classrooms and more confident about developing pedagogical techniques that emphasised students' negotiations between two cultures rather than the suppression of one in favor of the other.

We found ourselves trying to understand how our students' expectations about the classroom affected our work with them. For many, the familiar American assumption about the value of critical thinking and the corresponding emphasis on participation in argumentative discussion were culturally unfamiliar and even quite stressful. When students would resist engaging in discussion that advanced through amplification, qualification, and disagreement, we had to try to avoid seeing their reticence per se as a sign they were eager to assimilate. Indeed, it may have meant that they were having trouble assimilating, that they were retaining their previous culture's expectations. One Japanese student noted that, in America, you needed to be able to express yourself in order to make people to realize that you existed; she had felt the problem acutely in her several years in an American high school, for her reticence made her teachers consider her a slow learner, and they had told her so.

To deal with problems like these, members of the seminar have experimented with a wide variety of pedagogical techniques. On the one hand, we have tried to overcome students' reticence and passivity by prompting them especially

strongly to become critical readers of American social history, rather than simply notetakers. To our surprise, we found them far more willing to defend American practice than to attack it. A silent class would suddenly become involved when presented with a sharply critical reading of assumptions underlying an American text. On the other hand, we would discuss in class the problems involved in understanding a culture different from your own and then teach American texts with reference to that discussion. For example, we would seek to carefully select passages for discussion not just because of their centrality to a text, but also because they would be likely to be culturally misread. "Incorrect" responses to a text might not, we felt, result from sloppy or incomplete reading; it might therefore be highly counterproductive to try to correct them--or get another student to correct them via argument--and then move on. Since misreadings often masked moments of cultural interference, exploring them not only helped students understand the subject at hand, but also guided them, in the future, in examining and questioning their own responses to culture so that they could become translators rather than misreaders. They could thus learn to make use of their intuitions even though the context was culturally unfamiliar; they would not be wholly dependent on some desperate search for an authority with answers they could not reach on their own.

With these realizations, we found ourselves turning from the problems of dispute to the more daunting problem of how much we had to learn. We began our series of faculty papers, which continued, at first, the theme of immigrant history and literature, but which are now diverging into a variety of other areas. Indeed, the number of potential topics is as large as the number of topoi, themes, issues, and strategies in American culture that need to be historicized for non-native students. The possibilities for generating

cross-cultural material are even more endless. Even immigrant experience is highly varied: the need to understand not just the experience of a model immigrant at different eras in our history--something which often suppresses cultural diversity in favor of different political or ideological needs--but also the different experiences of immigrants from the cultures our students come from provides another inexhaustible topic for research. Most of the syllabi we are constructing touch on all of these areas. But none of them, obviously, will ever begin to encompass any of them.

Conclusions. It should be clear from the outline of the project's structure and the narrative of our progress that we consider our task to be anything but a "quick-fix" remedial program for non-native students. That is not to say that there might also be a short path with some results. But much would be lost along the way.

A "quick-fix" program would be almost unavoidably remedial in nature, something which would contribute to the ghettoization of students who are not, in our experience, at all "remedial" in either their level of intelligence or their possession of cultural information. Indeed, they are often culturally more sophisticated than their American counterparts.

Similarly, the problems that one needs to sort through in order to do justice to the nature of the project are anything but "basic skills" issues. They are ones that involve and alter the terms of some of the most important methodological debates of our day. And solving them requires a wealth of scholarly expertise, which, since it involves interdisciplinary and cross-cultural work, no one specialist will have. Moreover, the occasion of teaching non-native students is also the occasion for revising our own sense of our cultural tradition; it can contribute to the work of writing the literary and cultural histories we need for our era.

Finally, the complex goals and structure of a project like ours allow it to have impact well beyond its particular area of concentration. Enabling students to do well in later humanities courses is crucial to the success of our project; faculty training is almost as important an element in this process as the education of students. A "remedial" program will not reach senior faculty sufficiently to accomplish such an end. Equally important, a "remedial" project would not involve instructors in the humanities as much as is necessary. For teachers who already feel that they have sacrificed much of their scholarly expertise to service in basic programs, the addition of another such program will not be a strong incentive. Instead, a project in which two outcomes are sought, programmatic change and research and publication on issues of intellectual importance, is something that can allow humanities instructors a rare occasion for fusing service and scholarship in mutually reinforcing, rather than mutually inhibiting ways.

The Course

We are now completing our third semester of teaching courses we have designed. In discussing the faculty seminar, we have paid much attention to issues of syllabus construction and pedagogy; we won't repeat that material here. Also, since the structure and process of generating syllabi is what is most important for institutions considering replicating our work, and since our own work in syllabus-creation is not completed, we will not attempt to reproduce the syllabi we are currently developing. Nearly all of them, though, as remarked above, involve the attempt to work with our students' cross-cultural perspectives in presenting a representative range of American material, to incorporate some cross-cultural juxtapositions, and to include a component on the history and literature of immigration. We have also used a

variety of different sorts of material: literary texts, movies, slide shows, sociological and historical essays.

As of now, our testing procedures have only yielded results from our second semester of teaching; the results from the semester just concluded are still being processed. We believe we have learned, however, that it is important to teach every component of a course with a density of culturally and historically significant material. Issues must be significantly historicized for students to actively grasp the assumptions behind them and to have enough information to demonstrate that mastery. Members of the faculty seminar still disagree about different strategies for accomplishing this end; some argue that an extensive engagement with major texts, ones that represent a whole spectrum of issues in the culture in detailed complexity, is the best strategy for text selection. Others feel that a greater variety of shorter, interlocked readings is more effective. There are also disagreements about whether strict historical chronology should be followed or whether the juxtaposition of parallel texts from different times is more important.

The importance of historicization is, however, beyond debate. Most of our students come from third-world countries which have entered the post-modern world; they have some advanced information about popular culture in America, and, more important, they have experience at home with the cultural uprooting of modernism. Sometimes talking to them reverses the usual notion of America as a new world; Gertrude Stein's comment that America is the oldest country in the world because it entered the modern era first seems to be vivdly borne out. As a result, cultural difference, the motive force of our cross-cultural study, is often a very subtle phenomenon, buried beneath apparent similarities of custom, historical circumstance, and discourse. The superficial similarities of post-modern global cultures make it absolutely imperative that

generalizing cliches be avoided and American issues significantly historicized. The danger, shockingly enough, seems less that students will assimilate to American culture than they will assimilate what they learn about American culture superficially to the thin discourse of post-modern globalism.

We would also strongly recommend that a course like ours be carefully placed in the curriculum. We have found it very productive to have had our students all mainstreamed in a second semester of composition, before they come to us. Otherwise, ghettoization of our students would be hard to avoid. We are, however, still uncertain about whether, at the end of our project period, we should combine ESL and non-ESL students in our course, not only because it might be helpful to give the ESL students the benefit of a mixed classroom sooner, but also because our work has signficiantly revised the way many of us will present American literature, history, and art to our native students. Some are reluctant to take this step, however, because the linguistic anxiety of the ESL students is such that they all too frequently become silent observers in mixed humanities classes.

Since our evaluation procedures have only given us a small amount of preliminary feedback as yet, it is hard to assess our progress concretely at this time. Student comments, however, have been highly favorable; in numbers of instances, students have written that they now intend to take more courses in the humanities. Student enrollments have also jumped. In the first semester, we did not quite fill one class with a limit of 20; ESL students, we found, were extremely conservative and required some word of mouth testimony before trying something new. That word-of-mouth advertising is apparently now functioning. Since the pilot course, the College has limited funding to two sections a semester; both semesters, however, the sections have been closed at the beginning of registration period, with long waiting lists of students who wished to enroll.